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AUTHOR Dreier, William H.
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ABSTRACT

Eleven Iowa towns in 11 counties and 11 Area Education Agencies (AEAs), having both elementary and high schools in 1960, were chosen via a rural-urban continuum to ascertain evidence of creativity in providing community services after losing the high school between 1960 and 1980. The study compared: community services in 1955-56 and 1980-81 (a 24-item check list of services sent to 11 town clerks yielded 6 responses); number of city offices and officials in the 11 towns in 1974-75 and 1980-81; population, distance to high school, and rural-urban score for the 11 towns in 1960 and 1980; 1981 availability of services in the 6 towns and in 12 towns with high schools and similar populations. Findings indicated: all 11 towns without high schools lost services, but added some between 1955 and 1980; most towns added service personnel; the 12 towns with high schools often reported 7 of 11 services; the 6 towns were more rural between 1960 and 1980; and population in all towns increased between 1960 and 1980. The 11 towns were different in location, community, services, and city personnel. It was recommended that county, state, and federal governments recognize these differences and allow for creativity within each community. (AH)

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WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE HIGH SCHOOL LEAVES THE COMMUNITY?*

William H. Dreier
Professor of Education
University of Northern Iowa

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WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE HIGH SCHOOL LEAVES THE COMMUNITY?*

William H. Dreier
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University of Northern Iowa

Eleven towns scattered about Iowa in eleven different counties and eleven different Area Education Agencies were selected for this brief study. In 1960 all of these towns had both an elementary and a high school but during the next five or ten years all voted to combine with other districts. During most of the time between 1960 and 1980 these places have been without both an elementary and a secondary school within their city limits. What has happened, can any evidence be found for creativity in the austerity of being without a high school?

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF TOWNS

The 1960 population of the towns ranged from 156 to 1, 112 with an average of 440 people and a median of 436. Their location and 1960 population is shown in Figure 1. When each town had its own elementary school and high school then three places had their own weekly newspaper. The average size of the elementary school in 1955 was 144.2, with a range of 60 to 321 pupils. The average size of the high school was 69.5 with a range of 43 to 114 students. The total enrollment of these eleven public school districts ranged from 103 to 435 students, with an average of 213.5.

A measure of the position of the eleven towns on a rural-urban continuum was determined. A scale of one to nine, with one being most urban and nine most rural was used. The five factors were:

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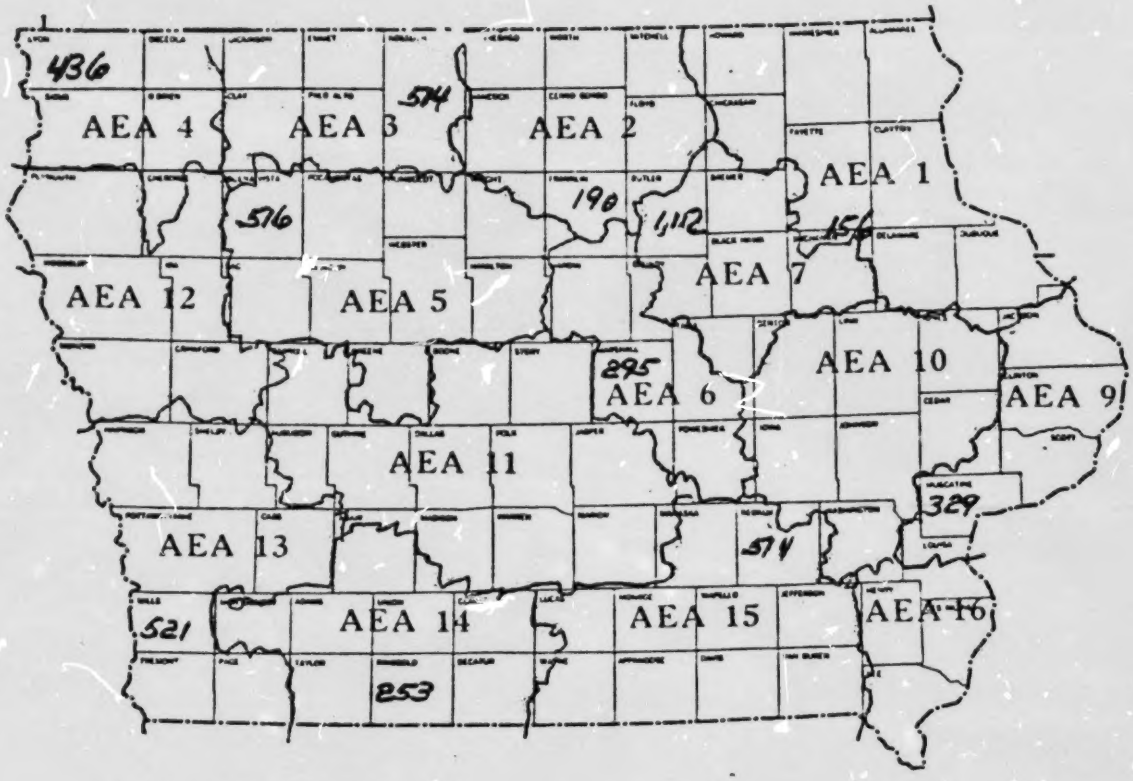
FIGURE 1

Location and 1960 Population of the Eleven Places in the Study



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A. Population: fewer than 200 people = 9; over 2,500 = 1

B. Distance to an urban place over 2,500: over 24 miles = 9; less than 3 miles = 1

C. Distance to an urban city of 10,000: over 48 miles = 9; less than 6 miles = 1

D. Distance to a small metro city of over 50,000: over 90 miles = 9; less than 20 miles = 1

E. Census distinction[1] between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan counties: county with largest town under 2,500 and not adjacent to county with place over 20,000 or 50,000 = 9; county with city of 1 million or more = 1

Using only the E factor the range the towns was from 9 to 4 with midpoint of 7. When all five factors were computed and their scores added the maximum most rural score was 45 and most urban score was 5. The average ruralness for the eleven towns was 28.2, the range was from 37 to 18. (See Table I)

COMMUNITY SERVICES 1955-56 and 1980-81

Each of the town clerks in the sample was sent a letter and a one-page check sheet, asking them to identify community services which were or were not available in 1955-56 and today, 1980-81.

Six of the clerks responded, whose towns had a 1960 population ranging from 156 to 1,112 people. The average size was 448, very near the mean of the total sample or 436. Their public school enrollment in 1955-56 ranged from 103 to 435, with a mean of 254.8 students. This is slightly higher than the mean of all elementary schools, which was 213.5. (See Table I)

The 24 items which the clerks in the six towns checked are listed in Table 2. The number and percent of the towns reporting that service in 1955 and then in 1980 and the percent of change is reported.

In the first 12 items we note all towns lost a high school and one-third lost an elementary school. Five other services were reduced: auto dealer, drug store, elevator and feed sales, hardware store, and lumber yard. The other five services remained in as many towns in 1980 as 1960: bank, clothing store, implement dealer, newspaper and supermarket.

TABLE I

Ruralness, K-12 Enrollment and 1960

Population of Eleven Places

	Measure of Ruralness	AEA #	1955-56 Total Enrollment	1960 Population
	37	AEA 3	156	514
	36	AEA 14	134	253
	32	AEA 5	244	516
	33	AEA 15	182	514
	30	AEA 2	256	124
	27	AEA 13	194	521
	26	AEA 1	253	156
	25	AEA 6	153	295
	24	AEA 4	103	436
	22	AEA 9	238	329
	18	AEA 7	435	1,112
Average (Mean)	28.2		213.5	433.6

TABLE 2

Community Services Reported by Clerks from

Six Towns for 1955-56 and 1980-81

Service	1955-56 Number	1955-56 Percent	1980-81 Number	1980-81 Percent
1. Auto Dealer	2	33.3	4 in 3	50.0
2. Bank	5	83.3	5	83.3
3. Clothing Store	2	33.3	2	33.3
4. Drug Store	2	33.3	1	16.7
5. Elementary School	6	100.0	4	66.7
6. Elevator & Feed Sales	10 in 6	100.0	11 in 5	88.3
7. Hardware Store	6 in 5	83.3	4	66.7
8. High School	6	100.0	0	0.0
9. Implement Dealer	2	33.3	2	33.3
10. Lumber Yard	5 in 4	66.7	3	50.0
11. Newspaper	3	50.0	3	50.0
12. Supermarket	0	0.0	0	0.0
13. Bowling Alley	0	0.0	0	0.0
14. Cafe or Tavern	13 in 5	83.3	10 in 4	66.7
15. Church	20 in 6	100.0	20 in 6	100.0
16. Dial Phone	3	50.0	6	100.0
17. Doctor	2	33.3	1	16.7
18. Gas Station	11 in 5	83.3	10 in 5	83.3
19. Grocery Store	9 in 5	83.3	5 in 4	66.7
20. Public Library	3	50.0	3	50.0
21. Sewage System	2	33.3	4	66.7
22. Surfaced Streets	4	66.7	6	100.0
23. Water System	5	83.3	5	83.3
24. Senior Citizens Housing	0	0.0	3	50.0

In 1980 half or more of the six reporting towns (with their 1980 population ranging from 147 to 1, 471 and medium of 458) had six of the first named twelve services:

Banks	5
Elementary school	4
Elevator and feed sales	5
Hardware store	4
Lumber Yard	3
Newspaper	3

Of the last 12 listed services, the bowling alley, like the supermarket, was not a part of any of the towns in 1960 or 1980. The services less frequently available were: Cafe or taverns reduced from five to four places and total numbers dropped from 13 to 10; a doctor, from two to one place; and the grocery store, from five to four places, with numbers changing from nine to five.

The church was the most available service in each town, with the six places reporting 20 churches in 1955 and in 1980. By 1980 all six places had surfaced streets, compared with four in 1955. The places with gas stations and number of places with water systems remained the same, five at both times. The total number of gas stations changed from eleven to ten.

The number of places reporting dial phones increased from three to six. The number with sewage systems increased from two to four, and by 1980 three of the towns had some Senior Citizen Housing, where none was available in 1955. Three places reported a public library in 1955, and they remained in 1980.

A second way to determine the availability of community service and if it was being maintained or declined during the time of the study, was to look at the Directory of Iowa Municipalities.[2] The Directory has not been published in the same format except for the last several years. The earliest year available to compare with 1980-81 was 1974-75.[3]

The city offices listed by the eleven towns in 1974-75 and 1980-81 are compared in Table 3. In 1980 most of the towns named people for the offices of: Clerk, Treasurer, Attorney, Fire Chief, and Police Chief. Seven of the eleven towns or 64 percent reported all five. Only the Police Chief position was dropped among the five offices, during the six year period, but was still listed by 55 percent of the towns.

The total number of different people named as Officers by the towns in the directory averaged 4.5 in 1974 and 6.0 in 1980. While one town listed only two positions in 1980, eight towns, or 73 percent listed five or six and one town listed ten different offices. The town with a population of 329 in 1960 who then listed 10, had six in 1980, and the town, population of 156 who had two in 1956 had 5 in 1980. Another town of 519 who reported two in 1974 had ten in 1980. The town of 253 in 1960 reported five offices and in 1980 with population of 244 had two offices: Clerk and Treasurer.

In conclusion we can say that between 1974 and 1980 nearly all the towns added officers. The four towns with 1980 populations of less than 300 changed from 21 different personnel in 1974 to 18 in 1980. The four towns with 1980 populations of 500 or more, changed from 19 to 27 positions, indicating some relation between size of town at this magnitude and number of service offices.

Population and Change on Rural Scale

Many small towns gained population in the two decades between 1960 and 1980. In their Des Moines Register articles Evans, Paxson, and Knudson[4] report that over half of the Iowa towns under 500 gained in 1970 while less than half of the largest 20 gained. Table 4 locates the eleven towns by AEAs and reports their 1960 and 1980

TABLE 3

City Officers Listed by Eleven Towns in

1974-75 and 1980-81 in Directory of Iowa Municipalities

A. Specific Officers -- by Name

		1974-75	1980-81	Gain or Loss
	Non-listed	1	0	-1
1.	Clerk	10	11	+1
2.	Treasurer	9	11	+2
3.	Attorney	6	10	+4
4.	Fire Chief	7	9	+2
5.	Water Chief	5	7	+2
6.	Police Chief	7	6	-1

B. Total Number of Different People Named as Officers

	1974-75	1980-81
None	1	0
Two	1	1
Three	1	0
Four	1	0
Five	4	2
Six	2	6
Seven	0	1
Nine	1	0
Ten	0	1
AVERAGE	4.5	6.0

TABLE 4

1960 and 1980 Population, Distance to High School and Rural-Urban Score for Eleven Towns in the Study

AEA #	Town	Population 1960	Population 1980	1980 Miles to High School	Score on Rural-Urban Scale 1960	Score on Rural-Urban Scale 1980
1	Stanley	156	156	7	26	26
2	Hansel	190	147	6	30	30
3	Wesley	514	598	9	37	37
4	Doon	436	540	13	24	23
5	Marathon	516	444	7	32	33
6	Liscomb	295	295	9	25	25
7	Shell Rock	1,112	1,471	6	18	18
9	Nichols	329	374	9	22	22
13	Emerson	521	502	4	27	27
14	Van Wert	253	244	11	36	34
15	Delta	514	481	7	33	32
	AVERAGE	439.6	477.5	8	28.2	27.9

population. Of the eleven, five lost population, two remained the same, and four gained population. The gains were greater in number by far than the losses. The average size numerically increased from 436.9 to 477.5.

These eleven places were from four to 13 miles away from the high school in their district, with the average being eight miles. On the Rural-Urban Scale the places changed very little in 20 years. Two places became more rural by two points and one place more urban by one point. The average score on the Rural-Urban Scale changed from 28.2 to 27.9 in twenty years.

Availability of Service in Two Select Groups of Towns

This final portion will compare the six towns whose clerk reported services, with twelve towns all in AEA #7 whose 1980 population was not more than the largest of the six in the study. A report made by the AEA in 1981 described all 24 districts in AEA 7[5] and reported the availability of twelve services mentioned earlier.

The one service of the twelve which the smaller towns had more frequently was a clothing store. Three others were as frequently found in one group as the other: Auto Dealer, Implement Dealer, and Newspaper. (Table 5).

None of the six towns whose population averaged 534 had a high school or super market. The twelve towns whose 1980 population averaged 980 more often had banks, drug stores, elementary school, elevator and food sales, hardware store, and lumber yard.

Summary and Conclusions

Someone had said differences are a difference only when they make a difference. This short report has shown that towns without a high school in this sample generally lost services, but also added some during the years between 1955 and 1980. The annual directory of municipalities indicates that most added service personnel between 1974 and 1980.

TABLE 5

Availability of Services in Two Select Group of Towns, 1980

Service	Six Towns in Study Population 147 - 1,471 Number	Percent	Twelve Towns AEA 7 Population 466 - 1,430 Number	Percent
1. Auto Dealer	2	33.3	4	33.3
2. Bank	5	83.3	12	100.0
3. Clothing Store	2	33.3	2	12.6
4. Drug Store	1	16.7	3	25.0
5. Elementary School	4	66.7	12	100.0
6. Elevator & Feed Sales	5	83.3	12	100.0
7. Hardware Store	4	66.7	12	100.0
8. High School	0	0.0	12	100.0
9. Implement Dealer	2	33.3	4	33.3
10. Lumber Yard	3	50.0	12	100.0
11. Newspaper	3	50.0	5	50.0
12. Supermarket	0	0.0	6	50.0

AVERAGE POPULATION OF TOWNS	N=6	1960	470	N = 12	806.2
AVERAGE POPULATION OF TOWNS		1980	534		980
PERCENT POPULATION INCREASE			14.3		21.7

When twelve small towns with high schools in Northeast Iowa are compared on twelve specific services with six small towns from the state sample, those with high schools more often reported seven of the eleven services, or 64 percent. Why, what makes the difference? Were the towns, and their councils, more creative? Does the rural-urbaniness make a difference? On the Rural-Urban Scale the six towns averaged 25 and the 12 towns 19, so the six were more rural. Does the size of the town in 1960 and in 1980 make the differences? The six towns average population changed from 470 to 534 for a 14.3 percent increase. The twelve towns averaged 806 people in 1960 and 980 in 1980, an increase of 21.7 percent.

In looking at the eleven towns without high schools in the sample we found their location, their community, their services, and their city personnel were not alike. They were at different places on the Rural-Urban Scale and the populations changed differently between 1960 and 1980. Iowa towns and places are different, this must always be honored and recognized. We would do well in our county, state and national governments to support our different towns and keep or make laws which give them choices and chances for creativity.

FOOTNOTES

[1]U.S. Bureau of Census, "Census Distinctions Between Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Areas," Rural Sociology and Environment in America, John E. Carlson, Marie L. Larsey and William R. Lassey. McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1981, page 10.

[2]1980-81 Directory of Iowa Municipalities, published by the League of Iowa Municipalities, Des Moines, Iowa. 1981 81 pp.

[3]1974 Directory of Iowa Municipal Officials published by the League of Iowa Municipalities, Des Moines, Iowa. 1974 170 pp.

[4]"Small Town Iowa: Can Main Street Survive?" Des Moines Sunday Register, Evans, Randy, Richard Paxson and Tom Knudson, Section A, page 1, January 3, 1982.

[5]Area Education Agency 7, Reorganization Study and Survey, 1981. Cedar Falls, Iowa, November 1981. 230 pp.